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ABSTRACT

The social and psychological factors which affect one person's acquisition of a second language are described in journal format. The psychological factors discussed are: (1) language shock, (2) culture shock, and (3) culture stress. The two social factors examined are both grouped under the term "social distance" but include (1) types of integration patterns of the learner toward the target group, (2) the attitudes of the learner toward the target group, and (3) the perceived attitude of the target group toward the learner. Language shock is manifested in the fear of appearing comic and in the frustration at the inability to express an idea in the target language. Culture shock caused the learner to reject speakers of the target language and the language program itself. However, her test scores indicated increased proficiency. Larsen and Smalley's theory that the second language learner needs a small community of sympathetic people who will help when she is a linguistic and cultural child was borne out in this single experience. (PMJ)

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SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

A Study of an Individual

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This paper is part of a Masters thesis dealing with social and psychological factors affecting second language acquisition. Specifically, this paper deals with one subject--me--in a total immersion language situation in Malang, Indonesia. I kept a journal during the ten-week program, and from that data I have attempted to describe the effect which aspects of language shock, culture shock and stress and social distance had on my acquisition of Indonesian. I have attempted to show that I experienced both positive and negative aspects of these factors and how the positive factors, such as acceptance by my Indonesian family, minimized the negative factors, such as rejection of my program, and allowed acquisition to take place.

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This paper will describe several social as well as psychological factors which affected one learner's acquisition of a second language. The psychological factors to be discussed are: (1) language shock, (2) culture shock, and (3) culture stress. The two social factors discussed are both grouped under the umbrella term "social distance" but include (1) type of integration patterns of the learner toward the target group, and (2) the attitudes of the learner toward the target group and the perceived attitude of the target group toward the learner.

The individual looked at in this study is me. For 11 weeks during the summer of 1976, I was one of 10 participants in an advanced Indonesian Abroad program. At least 5 times a week for my entire stay, I recorded my activities, thoughts and feelings in a journal. The journal format I used was developed in part from the "intensive journal" used by Ira Progoff. What I will do in this paper is further define the psychological and social factors described above and then show examples from my journal of their existence and their effect on my language acquisition. Because of the extremely personal nature of my journal, only a synthesis will be presented. Also, the names of the other participants and our American coordinator have been changed in this paper.

The site of the program was a resort and university town named Malang. It is located 50 miles inland from the east coast of the island of Java. IKIP, a teacher training college located in Malang, was where our Indonesian classes were held. I attended "Indonesian as a Foreign Language" classes with the 9 other participants Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. In addition to seminars given by the Indonesian staff at IKIP, we were given two hours of instruction daily by Dr. Fox, our coordinator and his Indonesian assistants.

Neither the language nor that part of the country was totally strange to me. This was the third time I had been to Indonesia. I had been an exchange student in Central Java for 3 months in 1971, and a visitor to that area in 1973 for 3 weeks. I had also studied Indonesian for the equivalent of three years in an intensive language program while an undergraduate at the University of Hawaii and for one quarter at UCLA.

While in Malang, I lived with an Indonesian family about 1.5 miles from campus. The family consisted of Pak Sarno, the ex-mayor of Malang, his wife, Bu Sarno, 3 student boarders and 3 servants. I had my own room in the house and ate all meals with the family.

So I embarked on the process of becoming bilingual. Larsen and Smalley, in their book on bilingualism, feel that for an individual to become bilingual they must become a member of the

target language community. This can pose problems for the learner which may result in negative reactions to the target language and people. Schumann states in one of his articles that "...these reactions often interfere with second language learning" (1975:210).

One of the problems confronting the learner is language shock, a manifestation of language learning difficulties. One aspect incorporated in this idea is the problem of naming objects and ideas correctly. The frustration and dissatisfaction in being unable to express an idea in your own native language is amplified in second language acquisition. My journal records the following examples of this:

Monday, June 14: One of the professors is arranging for a play to be given by the participants. I have been cast in a role, but then decide I don't have enough time to be in the play. I try to get myself out of it but Pak Soesanto (the professor) doesn't seem to understand that I just don't have enough time. I was advised to just not go to the first rehearsal, so I didn't. The next day all the Indonesians connected with the play questioned me. I tried to explain that I had already talked with Pak Soesanto and that I didn't have enough time but I don't think they understand me. I just don't have the vocabulary to adequately express myself and I feel so frustrated and embarrassed in not really being able to make myself competely understood.

Another entry notes: Saturday, June 19: I have gone downtown by myself. The biggest problem is how to ask for "thin" paper for airmail letters. I couldn't make myself understood, so finally I just dropped the whole matter and went home without the paper. This really irritated me as I wanted to write some letters and finally had enough free time to do so.

Finally: Sunday, July 4: Holes were burned in a tablecloth Bu Sarno lent me for our 4th of July party. How do I explain what happened? Times like these, words in Indonesian fail me. I manage more fluently than before, and make myself understood that the tablecloth will be replaced and it is necessary to replace it. However, I did it like an American translating into Indonesian and was dissatisfied with my explanation.

This problem seemed to ease as the summer progressed. After this entry there are few that deal specifically with it. With my increasing vocabulary I was more often than not able to get my meaning across.

A second problem in language shock may be the adult's fear

of appearing comic when using the target language. Erwin Stengal uses the analogy that using the target language is like wearing fancy clothes. His feeling is that these tendencies toward exhibitionism and their repression can encourage or repress second language acquisition respectively (see Schumann, 1975:212).

For example: Saturday, June 19: Friday night there was a dinner reception in our honor at the auditorium at school. After we ate dinner, a few of the professors got up and told "funny" stories about their experiences in the U.S. Then they wanted all of us to get up and do the same about our experiences in Indonesia. I politely refused, but Walt and Glenn got up. The guests not only laughed at the stories but also at the awkward, non-fluent Indonesian used by them. I felt terribly embarrassed. The Indonesians did this because they honestly thought it would be funny and thought we would laugh too. I don't laugh when they try to speak English and I don't think it is funny when I make a mistake. This is one time where I feel I cannot get up and make a fool out of myself for others to laugh at because I wouldn't think it was funny. If find that situations and embarrassment like this inhibits my ability to speak.

Another example a month later outside the school environment: Thursday, July 15 (I'm in Yogyakarta at the home of my other Indonesian Family. I am on a week's vacation.) It seems as if all the young people my age laugh at my Indonesian pronunciation and lack of vocabulary. I don't enjoy being laughed at, and I don't think it is funny!! I am unable to reply to even simple sentences after incidents like these.

The problem of language shock was real for me as these examples indicate. It is interesting to note that this fear of appearing comic and my frustration and dissatisfaction in being unable to express an idea in Indonesian inhibited my language in each specific instance but did not stop my acquisition of Indonesian when viewed in the context of the entire summer.

Culture shock as defined by Schumann is "anxiety resulting from disorientation encountered upon entering a new culture" (1975:212). A healthy person in his own culture is one who is in control of his own environment (see Schumann, 1975:212). He handles routine matters with minimum energy yet uses his maximum amount of energy to handle problems and unpredictable events. When this person enters a new culture his means of coping and solving problems in his own environment are not adequate for the new culture and, when used, do not get the desired results. Tasks that were routine in the native culture now take tremendous amounts of energy in the new culture.

Schumann believes that these conditions can produce fear, anxiety and depression. Culture shock may pass quickly as ways of working within the society are learned, but more subtle problems remain producing stress for longer periods of time. The solution to these problems of culture shock and stress seem simple: learn the language of the new environment. However, as Schumann points out "culture shock and culture stress can induce a whole syndrome of rejection which diverts attention and energy from learning the second language" (1975:213).

One of the first things rejected can be the speakers of the target language. The learner has the feeling that it is the people in the environment who are causing his general disorientation. He has difficulties identifying very closely with them, which is necessary to learn the language. Even though I have been to Indonesia before, this type of rejection did appear.

Saturday, June 12: I have been told that I have an appointment with the head of the visa office to extend the visas for the entire group. When I arrive with Laura (another member of the group), we find no one there and no record of any appointment. I am so tired and frustrated with the Indonesian way of not keeping appointments and not telling people what is going on.

I was really strong in my rejection of certain types. Saturday, June 19: (I am referring to the Friday night reception) The men are really incredible. Some of them are really "macho" types swaggering around. The unmarried men all sat across the auditorium from Laura and me during the reception and giggled and stared. I hate this.

While in Yogyakarta with my other family my rejection becomes the strongest. Thursday, July 15: The young married couples sit around with nothing to do and complain about how difficult life is or how tired they are. The young unmarried people don't seem to carry on serious conversations with anyone and spend a lot of time in empty chatter.

Finally I note: Sunday, July 18: I feel my language has deteriorated while I have been in Yogyakarta because of the way part of the family has behaved towards me. I have felt like an outsider and have rejected them. I am tired of the attitude of some of the family, laughing at me or being impatient with me in my attempt to learn their language.

My rejection of the speakers of the target language seemed to taper off after my vacation in Yogyakarta. Another rejection, that of the entire academic program at IKIP, never dissipated.

Schumann feels that this type of rejection may "block the commitment to the host country which is necessary for successful second language acquisition" (1975:213).

Wednesday, June 9: We have started school, and I am appalled at what is happening. We must memorize a dialogue from Dr. Fox's book and repeat it back word for word. We must memorize this dialogue every night plus do exercises plus read 5-6 pages plus do exercises for the other half of our school day run by the Indonesian staff. What we're doing with Dr. Fox could be done at any university in the U.S. After our sessions with Dr. Fox and his assistants we have 2 hours of lecture by the Indonesians: 1 hour about literature and 1 hour about history. There are no opportunities to speak during those 2 hours unless it is to ask specific questions. There has been no use of the total immersion situation at all and I am quite unhappy. I wanted to be fluent by the end of summer, but now I don't know.

Monday, June 4: Dr. Fox stated in front of the entire group that he was displeased with my memorization of his dialogue. This had the effect of turning me off entirely form the rest of the lesson for the rest of the day.

However, though these experiences and my rejection of school did have a negative effect on my acquisition, my entry of Friday, June 25 reads: I am studying less and enjoying it more. As long as I don't get too upset by Dr. Fox or the rest of the teachers I'm OK. I feel now that my language is finally progressing rather than at a standstill.

Friday, July 9: The best part of the day is when school is over. I find myself using more Indonesian and making fewer errors.

My rejection of the program continued throughout the 10 weeks yet I still managed to continue acquiring the language. My pre and post test scores indicate some improvement:

	Pre	Post		Pre	Post
Grammar	58	73	Reading	33	67
Listening	43	48	Dictation	89	94

(The tests were developed and administered by the Indonesian staff.)

Larsen and Smally have an alternative to the problems of culture shock and culture stress. That is "What the learner

needs is a small community of sympathetic people who will help him in the difficult period when he is a linguistic and cultural child-adult. He needs a new family to help him grow up" (Schumann, 1975:214).

Through examples in my own journal I have found this to be true. The family I was living with in Malang were all very supportive of my attempts to learn Indonesian. I believe this support was necessary for my Indonesian to have advanced to the point it did. The most important aspect of this support was that I felt totally accepted as a family member. The first indications of this I note Saturday, June 26: Two of the boarders are gone. I stay home and watch television with the Sarno's and we decide to play Scrabble. (We play in English as the board doesn't have enough vowels for Indonesian and I don't speak Dutch.) The Sarnos have a working knowledge of English and a great passive vocabulary. However, they rarely speak English with me. Bu Sarno won decisively. Despite this, I feel very comfortable and part of the family now. Earlier I had a long talk with Bu Sarno on the policy of hiring and firing of servants. I spoke totally in Indonesian with no use of English words at all.

Another example of total family acceptance came on July 3: The 10 participants are hosting a 4th of July party for all Indonesian staff at IKIP, our families, friends, etc., about 200 people. Bu Sarno let us borrow her kitchen today to do part of the cooking. She and all three of the servants helped Laura, Cindy, Scott and me the entire day.

What effect did this have on my language acquisition? Sunday, July 4: I still feel much less than happy about the reading and memorizing we have to do for school but feel my Indonesian progressing on the day-to-day living situation level.

The most support, acceptance and show of confidence I received from the family came at the end of the program. The Sarnos have gone to Jakarta for a week to pick up their daughter-in-law and granddaughter from Belgium. The 3 students are not home either as they are having vacation now. The Sarnos have left me in charge of the house and the servants while they are gone. The servants all understand me and I can communicate with them with no problem.

In summary of the psychological section of my paper, it would seem that I did experience language shock. However, culture shock and culture stress were much stronger than language shock. I experienced a temporary rejection of the people and culture and a 10-week long rejection of the program in which I was involved. Nevertheless, language acquisition occurred and rapidly. It is my belief that the atmosphere and acceptance that existed in my living situation diluted the shock and stress

I felt in outside situations and made it easier for me to improve my language.

I would now like to discuss the factor of social distance. According to Schumann's article dealing with this subject, "Social distance pertains to the individual as a member of a social group which is in contact with another social group whose members speak a different language" (1976:135).

More specifically, this section of my paper will discuss my type of integration pattern as well as my attitudes toward the target group and their attitudes toward me as I perceived them.

Schumann indicates that "...there are 3 general integration strategies which the second language learner group might adopt: assimilation, acculturation or preservation" (1976:136). Assimilation can be defined as giving up one's own life style and values and adopting those of the target language group. Acculturation is the adaptation of the life style and values of the target language group by the learner but the maintenance of his cultural patterns for use within his own group. Preservation is the complete rejection of the target language, culture and values and the maintenance of one's own cultural pattern.

In my case it would seem that acculturation was the pattern. Our group had a high degree of interaction and was fairly large. Because of this, I maintained my cultural patterns for use within the group and did not totally adopt the Indonesian way of life.

June 9th my journal notes: We have classes together each day separate from the other Indonesian students. We are also kept on a separate time schedule. There is no integration with them except during out half-hour break. Even then, contact is minimal.

I always spoke English with the rest of the group and retained my identity as an American with them. Yet I was accepted into my Indonesian family and adopted the life style and values of that environment as my own. I experienced great conflict because of this and it did have an effect on my language.

August 20: The program has ended. It seemed that overall I had the most trouble with Indonesian if I had been speaking and thinking in English with the rest of the group. It required a tremendous effort for me to switch over to thinking and speaking in Indonesian.

The second social factor included in this study of social distance is the attitude of the two groups toward each other.

Attitude is defined as the "cultural expectations maintained by the second language group towards the target group and vice verse" (Schumann, 1976:138).

Schumann states that the assumption is that if the two groups have positive values of each other, this will enhance the learner's acquisition of the language. He claims "this is especially true if both groups hold the belief that the acquisition of the target language is both possible and desirable" (1976:138).

My own attitude toward the target language group was fairly positive. For example, Monday June 4th my journal reads: Everyone in the family has been most helpful. Pak and Bu Sarno and the three students here help me all they can. They speak slower with me and have great patience.

June 9th I note: What I am enjoying is being with my family and being involved in general Indonesian life.

Yet my attitude towards the program and the people running it was in direct contrast to this. Monday, July 5: What a rotten day. My Indonesian is not coming and I have wasted time as the tapes are not in order in the lab. Fox's incompetence and blaming things on others is driving me crazy. The Indonesians have no flexibility in their part of the program. I HATE IT.

My coordinator's attitude towards me seemed little better. Tuesday, June 5: Dr. Fox has just informed me that I am lucky that I was one of the 10 participants as I was a borderline case and my Indonesian wasn't that good.

The Indonesians had a slightly different viewpoint. Wednesday, June 16: The teachers' attitudes towards us as a group has widened the gap between us. They seem to view us as rather stupid and inept. This has the effect of lessening my desire to study.

My journal notes on Friday, June 18: The attitude of some of the instructors here is "how could anyone (Western), especially an American woman, know anything about Indonesia or Indonesian." This attitude makes it very difficult for me to communicate.

July 8, I observe: Our lessons with the Indonesian staff seem to have no organization but seem to be a conglomeration of readings thrown at us to see if we can do them.

My relationship with our coordinator, Dr. Fox, improved considerably as the program continued. August 1, I note:

My relationship with Fox has improved because I treat him respectfully and because I make an attempt to be organized and prepared for every lesson. The only way to get through this program is to make him like me.

However, the attitude of the Indonesian teachers toward us remained one of seeing how much we could actually do without the benefit of organized instruction. That is how I perceived their attitude. August 15, Sunday: This is the last week of formal classes and we are tested on the 16th and 18th of August. The pace is being stepped up and the instructors are asking us for written compositions, evaluations and summaries or reading texts with no previous instruction in any sort of writing given us at all.

It is very difficult to separate this category of social distance from the psychological category of culture shock and rejection. In summary, I believe the attitudes of my Indonesian family were positive towards me. My attitude towards them was also positive. On the other hand, my attitude towards the program and the instructors was less than positive as I felt their attitude towards me as an Indonesian learner were. It did have the effect of inhibiting my study of their lessons as shown in my journal examples. However, I still progressed in the language.

In conclusion, it would appear that my language acquisition was a complex process affected both positively and negatively by the psychological and social factors described above as well as others. It is my belief that the positive factors outweighed the negative factors and acquisition was able to take place during the 11-week span of my experience.

It has been my purpose in this paper to describe the effect of language shock, culture shock and culture stress as well as social distance on one individual in the hopes that it will shed further light on how these factors affect the second language acquisition process.

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